



The Croydon Chronicle

Fall 2013

Letter from the Supervisor

If I had to pick a favorite season, it would have to be fall. There is something about the golden sunlight that fall brings reflecting off of the red, yellow and orange of the trees. I love putting on a hooded sweatshirt and sneakers and hiking around in the woods in search of the most beautiful fall leaf I can find.

Fall is a time for getting ready. We humans start preparing for the winter by putting away shorts and flip flops and retrieving almost forgotten sweaters and scarfs. Nature is getting ready, too. Animals are growing their winter coats and stockpiling food for the winter. Some are preparing to migrate to warmer climates while others are getting ready to burrow down for their long winter's nap.

Here at the Nature Center we are preparing for a lineup of exciting fall

programs including campfires, hikes, story times and much more. Join us for our first ever **Fall Night Hike and Campfire** as we take a hike in the woods looking for nocturnal creatures and end around a campfire complete with a campfire treat. Looking for something to do on a Sunday afternoon? Our new **Fall Ramble Family Hikes** are a great way to spend some time outdoors with a naturalist hiking the trails of the Hayes Forest Preserve. Our popular **Nature Tots** series is coming back this fall with a new slate of topics for you to enjoy with your pre-school aged child. And, of course, we cannot forget one of our most popular events, **Croydon Creep**, which will be held on Friday, October 18, 6-8 pm. We have lots of fun things planned for this year's Creep including a magician, kids crafts and some new additions to our Trick-or-Treat Trail.

We hope that you will find time in your schedule to join us at one or more of our events.

As always, we are looking for ways to improve the Nature Center and the programs that we offer. We have introduced new birthday party themes for kid's birthday parties and are trying new things in our programming. We would love to hear any ideas you have about programs that you would like to see offered. Please send any ideas you may have our way.

We look forward to seeing you this fall around Croydon Creek!

Kind Regards,

Melinda Norton
Acting Supervisor

Croydon Creek Nature Center

852 Avery Rd, Rockville, MD, 20851

Phone

240-314-8770

Web address

www.rockvillemd.gov/croydoncreek

E-mail

ccnc@rockvillemd.gov

Hours of Operation

Tuesday through Saturday,
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

Closed Mondays

In This Issue:

Kids Corner.....	pg. 2
Croydon Creep.....	pg. 2
Nature's Recycling Heroes.....	pg. 3
Party With Us!	pg. 4
What's Happening.....	pg. 4

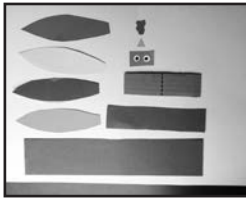
Kids Corner

Kids Activity - Paper Turkey Table Topper

Supplies:

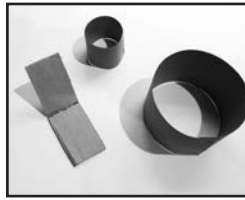
- Piece of corrugated cardboard
- Construction paper: black, brown, tan, and orange, gold, red
- Wiggle eyes
- Scissors
- Glue stick or stapler
- Optional: Fall leaves for tail feathers

Instructions:



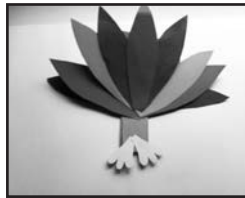
1. Cut:

- One 1.5" by 5" strip of corrugated cardboard
- One 2" by 11" strip of brown or black construction paper for the turkey body
- One 1.5" by 6" strip of brown or tan construction paper for the head
- Nine 1.5" by 5.5" strips of each orange, brown and red construction cut into a feathery shape. You may also use fall leaves for the tail feathers.
- Two yellow or orange construction paper cut into a feet shape
- Orange triangle for beak
- Red wattle



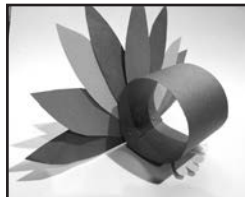
2. Glue or staple the ends of the 11" and the 5" long strips of paper together forming two loops.

3. Fold cardboard strip in half.



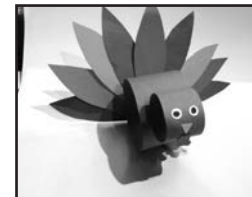
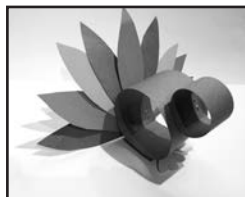
4. Glue the feet on one end of the folded cardboard strip and the feather shaped papers or fall leaves on the other end of the cardboard.

5. Glue or staple the larger loop on both sides of the cardboard, forming a 90° angle.



6. Glue or staple the smaller loop on the body loop.

7. Glue wiggle or paper eyes, beak and wattle in place.



Croydon Creep

at the Nature Center

**FRIDAY, OCT. 18
6-8 P.M.**

- Spooky Nature Hike
- Magic Show
- Hands-On Activities and Games

*All Ages Welcome • \$2 per person at the door
Children under two are free*

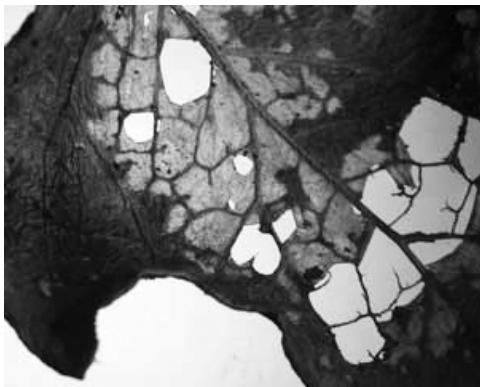


www.rockvillemd.gov/croydoncreek
240-314-8770

Nature's Recycling Heroes

By Cristina Alves, Naturalist

I see a brightly colored leaf fall to the forest floor. I look up anticipating the beauty of the coming season. The days will soon become shorter, the nights cooler and the leaves of the oak tree will go from dark green to bright gold to brown. By the time most leaves have fallen, there will be a thick carpet on the forest floor. Trees in temperate deciduous forests of Eastern North



America can drop 3-5 tons of leaves per 2 ½ acres every year in preparation for the winter. How come the leaves don't accumulate and pile up into tall, impenetrable masses?

Thanks to a natural process called decomposition, when leaves die, they rot and break down so that their nutrients are recycled back into the environment for other organisms to use. The process of decay and decomposition is vital to all lifecycles. Without decomposition, the planet would be covered with dead leaves and other organic matter. There would be no new plant growth because nutrients would not be returned to the soil. There would be no food for animals and we would be unable to survive. Although decomposers are mostly tiny and work out of sight, their work is gigantic. Through recycling of organic matter they guarantee the continuation of life in all of the earth's ecosystems. Decomposers are in fact, nature's real recycling heroes.

The decomposition of plant material is aerobic, meaning that it needs to

take place in the presence of oxygen. When people make garden compost, they use the same decomposition process as nature but accelerate it by concentrating the organic matter in one pile. When oxygen is present, bacteria action on the leaves generates heat to accelerate decay. When the temperature of the compost begins to decrease, we turn the pile to add oxygen. If the oxygen supply gets too low the process becomes anaerobic and the pile begins to smell bad. To keep the decomposition process going, we need to continually turn the pile to add oxygen. Plant compost can be used as rich soil conditioner to improve the fertility level of soil in a yard or garden.

In nature, decomposition is spread out on the forest floor in both space and time. Huge amounts of leaves from deciduous trees and the foliage of non-woody plants are generally decomposed within a year of falling on the forest floor. Scavengers come in first to break down dead plant material by chewing and excreting it. Mites and springtails alone recycle about 30% of leaves and dead plant material on the forest floor. They get the organic material ready for fungi and bacteria to come in. Fungi play an important part in decomposition.



The leaf litter is quickly invaded by the white thread-like filaments (hyphae) that are the main body of a fungus. The hyphae draw nutrients from the litter, enabling the fungi to grow and spread, while breaking down the structure of the dead plant material. As the process

continues, other invertebrates including slugs, snails and earthworms enter the scene and continue the process. The next time you look at the litter layer on the forest floor and see the skeleton of a leaf, you are probably looking at a leaf that had much of its tissues decomposed.



Nature's recycling heroes also play an important part in the decomposition of other things besides dead leaves. Decomposition of trees and other woody plants takes place in much the same way as that of the leaf litter in the forest. However, the process is much slower and might take several years or even decades. Dead animal material is also decomposed. Like plant material, decomposition in animal material is started by scavengers, but bacteria, rather than plants do most of the heavy lifting.

Decomposition and decay are vital in terms of the functioning of ecosystems. Just like compost in a garden, they provide essential nutrients for the growth of new organisms and are a key aspect of the cyclical processes that maintain all life on Earth. When the time comes to rake leaves from your yard, think of how much work the tiny organisms called decomposers have to go through to keep the planet clean and alive. Maybe decomposers will even inspire us to recycle more, too.

Did You Know...

- The Fall Equinox is on September 22 this year. This is when the sun is aligned with the plane of the Earth's equator and daylight and dark are close to equal lengths.
- Squirrels can collect and bury hundreds of nuts in a day preparing for winter. Using memory and their highly developed sense of smell they find them in the winter months. As much as 50% can go undiscovered. This makes squirrels one of our most important tree planters.

Party on the Wild Side!

Download our Party Brochure for more info.
<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/croydoncreek/>

What's Happening at the Nature Center

Bird Seed Sale

Orders due by Monday, Dec. 2

**Pick up on Saturday, Dec. 14
Noon to 4 p.m.**

**Look for flyers in the mail
the first week of November.**

Croydon Creek Nature Center

852 Avery Road
Rockville, MD 20851
240-314-8770

www.rockvillemd.gov/croydoncreek

The Croydon Chronicle

Fall 2013 Classes



Creek Clean Up

Earn SSL hours while helping to clean up our creek and trails. No advanced registration is required. Participants under age 14 must be accompanied by an adult.

All Ages
44814 Sa 10/5 9:30 AM-12 PM Free

Natural Holiday Crafts (Adult/Child)

Spend the afternoon using a variety of natural or recycled objects to make holiday crafts and ornaments. Each participant will complete at least three projects. Adult participation required for children under age 8. Register by: 11/20

Age: 3-10
44810 Su 11/24 1:30-3 PM \$12/\$14

Visit <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/recreation/guide/> to register today!

Croydon Creek Campfire (Adult/Child)

Gather around the campfire with your friends for stories, snacks and more. An adult must accompany children and all participants must register. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs for seating.

All Ages

Fall Night Hike and Campfire

Enjoy a twilight hike through the woods with our Naturalists. Discover the sights and sounds of the forest preserve after dark as you stroll through the woods. Bring a flashlight.

44802 Sa 9/28 7-8 PM \$5/\$6

Creepy Crawlies

What is creeping and crawling during the night at CCNC? Learn all about creatures that prowl, slither, skulk and lurk.

44803 Sa 10/26 7-8 PM \$5/\$6

Fall Folklore

Tall tales and fantastic folklore are an American tradition. Find out how the chipmunk got his stripes and hear other classic stories.

44804 Sa 11/23 6-7 PM \$5/\$6

Fall Ramble: Family Hikes

Join a Naturalist on a fall family hike through the Hayes Forest Preserve. We'll explore the changing landscape that autumn brings as we hike the moderate trails. Our trails are not stroller friendly. All participants, including adults, must register. Children under age 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

All Ages

44811 Su 10/20 1-2 PM \$3/\$5
44812 Su 11/17 1-2 PM \$3/\$5

Croydon Creek Nature Center

852 Avery Rd, Rockville, MD, 20851

Phone

240-314-8770

Web address

www.rockvillemd.gov/croydoncreek

E-mail

ccnc@rockvillemd.gov



City of
Rockville
Get Into It

Hours of Operation

Tuesday through Saturday,
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, 1-5 p.m.

Closed Mondays

Nature Tots (Adult/Child)

Spend time with your child discovering the wonders of nature. A Naturalist will help you explore a new nature topic through nature play, crafts, stories and hikes. Dress for the weather. This program is intended to provide special one-on-one time for you and your child. Adult participation required.

Age: 2-5

Beavers

44794	Th	9/26	10-11:30 AM	\$8/\$10
-------	----	------	-------------	----------

Camouflage

44795	Th	10/10	10-11:30 AM	\$8/\$10
-------	----	-------	-------------	----------

Spiders

44796	Th	10/24	10-11:30 AM	\$8/\$10
-------	----	-------	-------------	----------

Leaves

44797	Th	11/7	10-11:30 AM	\$8/\$10
-------	----	------	-------------	----------

44798	Sa	11/9	10-11:30 AM	\$8/\$10
-------	----	------	-------------	----------

Turkeys

44799	Th	11/21	10-11:30 AM	\$8/\$10
-------	----	-------	-------------	----------

Birds of Prey

44800	Th	12/12	10-11:30 AM	\$8/\$10
-------	----	-------	-------------	----------

44801	Sa	12/14	10-11:30 AM	\$8/\$10
-------	----	-------	-------------	----------



Saturday Story and Hike (Adult/Child)

Stop by the Nature Center for story time and a hike. Our Naturalist will read a story and lead a hike based on the story. Dress for the weather. Adult participation required.

Age: 2-5

44807	Sa	9/21	10-11 AM	\$4/\$6
-------	----	------	----------	---------

44808	Sa	10/12	10-11 AM	\$4/\$6
-------	----	-------	----------	---------

44809	Sa	11/16	10-11 AM	\$4/\$6
-------	----	-------	----------	---------



Star Party

Join us to learn about the stars in the fall sky. Discover objects easily visible in the night sky, look through telescopes with an astronomer and enjoy a campfire treat. All participants must register.

Age: 5+

44806	Sa	11/2	7-8 PM	\$6/\$8
-------	----	------	--------	---------

SCOUT BADGE DAYS



WEBELOS FORESTER BADGE
Sun., Oct. 6

WEBELOS NATURALIST BADGE
Sun., Nov. 3

2-4 p.m.

Naturalists will help you complete the necessary requirements to achieve the badges.

All materials provided; however, badges are not supplied by the Nature Center. Programs held rain or shine. Dress for the weather.

Cost: \$14 residents; \$16 non-residents
For additional information or to register,
call Melinda Norton at 240-314-8771.